

HOUSE OF LORDS #15

This is *House of Lords*, a zeen by, for and about publishing and publishers, GMing and GMs. It runs no games, and is available to just about anybody. It's composed primarily of the thoughts of its publisher, and an array of letters on topics relevant to publishing a dipzeen in the modern world. Hopefully, this is a forum for those with experience to share the wealth.

You can get this zeen one of three ways. First of all, by sending me one American Dollar per issue. Second, by trading publications with me. Third, if you don't pub, but get some interesting zeens which I don't get, I may be willing to trade for a few issues of those. Make me an offer.

I also expect a fair amount of participation from all of you out there. This zeen sinks or swims on the basis of your contributions. Yes, we spell it "zeen."

Your publisher for this evening is Julie Martin, 17601 Lisa Dr, Rockville, MD 20855-1319.

Each subheading has at one time been the subject of a New Business "feature." That's how we choose topics, more or less. If you'd like to see a particular topic discussed, just write a couple paragraphs worth of your opinions on the subject to get the ball rolling and we'll go with it.

Announcements

Everything was going along fine this time, until I got the latest issue of *Praxis* and found out that Alan had scooped me on practically all the new material in this issue. Polls, Bad Boys (my new topic), fakes, it was all there, and a better job at that—less vitriolic, more different points of view. Very discouraging after I had spent dozens of hours typing in letters. Well, hopefully our two discussions will complement each other.

Tis the season for feuds, folds, and fakes. We'll start with the folds:

No Fixed Address came out with one last issue, just like Bruce always told us it would. Steve Hutton went out with a bang.

Adios to *Lone Star Diplomat*. Mike Conner says drop him from the mailing list—he's going on the ultimate Dip Vacation.

Scott Hanson has suddenly decided to quit *Big Hits of Mid-America*. He hopes his final contribution to the hobby is an example of a quick clean fold.

Several others zeens have shifted to a primarily warehouse format, among them:

Hugh Christie (*Over There*) and Bob Smith (*Life Goes On*), who blame their "fold" on hobby feuds. I'm afraid publishing never has been and never will be a job for the thin-skinned. If you dish it out to "Mr Zero," you'd better be able to take it from him.

Magus, by Steve and Daf Langley, has changed focus, corresponding to the Langleys' move to Seattle. They've already gotten together with Terry Tallman once—expect to see funny things coming out of Washington. By the way, Don Williams' *Fiat Bellum* is taking up the slack left from the "fold."

And Conrad von Metzke says that he is chucking *Costaguana* "as we understood it." Did we ever?

This brings us to the fakes, namely:

Conradoguana looks like a fake, even though the back page claims that the game results and the Runestone Poll ballot insert are real. Whoever did this one has been around a while, and has several people's styles down cold. Pretty funny stuff.

The Bad Boys have faked the ballot for the Walker, Miller, and Koenig awards, and deserve to win at least the first two for this effort.

The Chocolate Factory looked like the usual Linsey-type fake, and I see in *Praxis* that the fake-master himself, Gary Coughlan, agrees with me. I found it unfunny—especially considering how eminently satirizable **High Inerita** should be. But at least it tops the next entry:

House of Lords #14, the worst Linsey fake in a long time. It didn't look like **HoL**, it didn't sound like **HoL**, and, of course, it fooled no one except Mark Nelson (who can be forgiven because he hasn't been around too long, at least in the US hobby). Several obvious tipoffs to the fake were that it contained material from Linsey, who will only discuss the poll in *Praxis*; that it announces several changes-in-policy for the poll, though Linsey never changes in response to peer pressure; and that it was almost civil throughout. Then again, I have also seen a copy of a polite letter Linsey recently wrote to Robert Sacks—it must be poll time again!

Talking about fakes makes me think of cons:

Dixiecon II: May 28-9 at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, will be run by the Carolina Amateur Diplomats. For further information, write or call David Hood, 604 Tinkerbell Rd, Chapel Hill, NC, 27514, phone (919) 967-7608.

CloneCon Clone: June 25-6 at the Martin Mansion. Ask us for directions. This is not as serious as the other cons, but it will be real.

Atlanticon 88: July 1-3 at the Baltimore Convention Center and the Baltimore Hyatt Regency, Inner Harbor, will be run by Eastern Conventions, Inc (P O Box 15405, Baltimore, MD, 21220). Also Robert Sacks (4861 Broadway 5-V, NY, NY, 10034) would like to arrange some sort of hobby social for the evening of the 3rd and the day of the 4th, and may be looking for some help running the Diplomacy tournament. Who can help him out?

Dipcon XXI: July 1-4 in San Antonio, TX, will be run by the Diplomats of Texas Society (8222 Bent Tree, Suite 237, Austin, TX, 78759). Write Pete Gaughan for info, 3105 E Park Row, #132, Arlington, TX, 76010-3710, phone (817) 633-3208.

World Dip Con (Manorcon 88): July 15-19 at Birmingham University in England. The contact is Richard Walkerdine, 13 Offley Road, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 2AZ (0462-55741).

Can Con: August 12-14 at Glendon College, Toronto. Write Doug Acheson for info, 95 Dundonald St, Barrie, Ont L4M 3T4, phone (705) 726-9362.

Miscellany:

Mark Lew (438 Vernon, #103, Oakland, CA, 94610) has brought back **benzene** (with a small b). Subs are 60¢/issue. You want it. You want it bad.

The Buzzard's Breath still wheezes along. Mark Matuschak has cut out just about everything except Third Reich now—too bad, because the En Garde game was the only thing I followed in the zeen. This is not a plug, as you can surely tell.

The fourth annual People's Diplomacy Organization Relief Auction raised a total of \$600.08 for Dipdom Services. Guess who gets the 8¢.

Ken Peel is planning to revive the PDO Census. You can help satisfy his curiosity by sending him an up-to-date copy of your sub list. I assume that, as with the original census, only names and addresses are requested.

The next issue of **LoH** should be out in early June. Read it this time, will you? Robert is publishing it for me, but I'm the one writing it, and I'm putting a lot of work into it.

By the way, the new trade policy is that people who trade for **HoL** must take **Lord of Hosts**, the service zeen of the Miller Number Custodian, as well. Hey, who said this was a democracy, or even an anarchy? It is an oligarchy of the custodians. I see in *Praxis* (I don't get **Everything**) that the BNC is very upset that *someone* is running games without Boardman Numbers! Well, Steve, I have a solution for that. Assign 'em anyway! We have to be in The Poll whether we like it or not, don't we?

Speaking of The Poll, I'll be doing my part this year. I promise to print one page of vicious personal attacks against Bruce Linsey for every vote that **HoL** receives in The Poll. Vote often.

Since I wrote the above, I have found out through a third party that Heinowski has assigned numbers to Dick's games after all. Good for you, Steve, although you could at least have written us a polite note informing us of the project. I want to thank you for setting this valuable Hobby Precedent. I will be proud to follow in your footsteps.

The Concept

(DICK MARTIN) Hopefully, your subbers have adjusted to your editorial style by now. I hope so, as this time I bowed to popular demand: rather than folding *HoL* I passed it on to a new pubber. You were the most qualified candidate, by far. Congratulations, you are our Grand Prize winner for this evening! I am sure that there will be some things that I did better than you will, some things that you will do better than I did, and some things where we will just have different, equally good strategies. With time and a few issues completed, I think the readers will adjust just fine.

I am highly annoyed that Bruce Linsey stole the *HoL* masthead for his latest propaganda mailing. Not surprised, mind you, as he has a history of passing off his work as someone else's. But I worked hard to make *HoL* as credible as it is, and to have the name cheapened by fatuous propaganda just irks me. Unfortunate that he has so little confidence in his points that he feels the need to choreograph their presentation so delicately, and in such a form.

(MARK NELSON) It seems like an age, or more, since I last wrote to you. Since that first letter I've started to get a few more US zeens: *Frobozz*, *TAG*, *Abattoir*, *Nutmegs*, and *Everything*. *HoL* is still my favourite, it's the most fannish and interesting.

How long should your deadlines be? Who cares, as long as we know what they are? Four issues a year would be fine.

"I don't know if the overall trend of slowing production in UK zeens will ever be reversed..." - P Sullivan. In fact, the last time I looked the overall trend was speeding up! This year, several of the larger (and slower, it goes without saying) zeens have folded, and a few new, quick zeens have appeared.

Just saw your reply to my question on the best hobby zeens — "depends on who you're asking"...but I'm asking you, aren't I?

[Usually, I don't consider questions in this zeen to be direct questions to me, but rather general questions for all the readers to discuss.

[I don't recall asking you how long my deadlines should be—I don't have deadlines for this zeen. I'll publish when I have time and enough interesting material to make it worth while. That may turn out to be quarterly, or otherwise.]

(ROBERT SACKS)

Zeen Recommendations

Bushwacker for variants (not his politics)

The Gamer's Zeen for En Garde! and its press

Hansard for Pax Britannica, including

Known Game Openings for hobby information

House of Lords for hobby discussions

Masters of Deceit for novice information

Politesse for Washington area game news

Rebel for solid GMing, including

High Inertia for random discussion

The Wild Hunt for the best quality FRP APA

The Zeen Register for scope of coverage (not accuracy)

(BILL SALVATORE) May I call you to request that you generously allow me to visit your abode and read your copies of *Inner Light*?

You and Dick seem to support PDORA—I wonder why I didn't see a catalog in either *HoL* or *Retal*?

I, too, object to your not printing my letters as written, to wit, altering my spelling of the short version of the term "fan magazine," and thereby leading readers to think that I am of your wrongheaded persuasion in that regard.

[It's in the houserules, Bill, you knew it when you signed up.

[Personally, I don't like including any kinds of ballots, flyers, catalogs, etc, in the zeen. Dick just doesn't have room to spare.

[Are you coming to our CloneCon, the last weekend in June? If so, you can look at our *Inner Lights* then. Or else call for an appointment, but bear in mind, we have a long waiting list for perusing this legendary zeen. If you want to look at old *Bushwackers*, you can come in tomorrow.]

(LARRY PEERY) I would like to propose a couple of topics for next time, and I hope next time won't be too far off since I think these topics need discussion soon.

How should we, individually or collectively, deal with the problem of a returning GM or pubber who has had a messy fold in the past?

What, if anything, can we do to encourage people to try publishing a Dip zeen? As Simon said, we seem to be short of good ones.

It's true. People have given up feuding. Or, more accurately, they've exchanged their blunderbusses for stilettos. I'm not sure if that's progress or not...Slowly, but slowly, it seems we are moving toward an acceptance of the idea that we

can each be ourself—warts and all—and that we don't have to be a mirror figure of somebody else in the hobby. At least that's my impression. What do you think?

[I don't agree—as a matter of fact, I have been amusing myself lately comparing the British hobby feuds with those in American Dipdom. It seems to me that each American "hobby giant" has a counterpart in the British hobby—Rod Walker's stunt double is Richard Walkerdine (even their names are similar!), Bruce Linsey's doppelganger is John Piggott, Simon Billenness' twin is... Simon Billenness, and so on. I haven't figured it all out yet.]

(KEN PEEL) And speaking of inferior, I might as well put in a word about our esteemed Mr Olsen. My, quite a long memory Goldenagepressy speaking. Yea, I remember some long tome on the subject from Sir Rodney some time ago—whether it was a letter or something in *Erehwon*, I simply couldn't say...but trust the source. Trust me.

By the way, I *do not* lie (a lot). So there.

[Speaking of inferior...were we speaking of inferior? Oh, so solly, but I felt the previous paragraph of your letter fit better elsewhere.]

Archives

(STEPHEN DORNEMAN) It's shock Mark Nelson time—I, like Pete Gaughan, throw away old zeens. I don't have much space to work with, and I don't have enough time to reread treasured favorite books, much less old Dipzeens, and so once I've gotten five issues of the zeen or so, when the new one comes in, the oldest issue goes out. On another subject, Mark says that other interests, if pursued instead of pubbing, would also involve the spending of money. True, but I tend to pursue those other interests *and* pub, spending money on both! Thank heavens for Master Card and Lady Visa.

(mark lew) zeens I don't want anymore go in box 1, and zeens I want to keep (for a while at least) go in box 2. the only permanent residents of box 2 are *vd*, *dd*, (two of *your* favorite zeens, i'm sure), and of course the inestimable *inner light*. everything else finds its way into box 1 after a few months. box 1 is always available to anyone who wants to take it off my hands. (i've often been tempted to throw it out, but something holds me back.) the current one is pretty old now. looks like

about 120 zeens mostly from '83 and '84, but also a few older ones (including some early *retals* with pictures of a certain ms glass...). all this available for price of postage (or best offer).

[How can you give away your precious *Retals*?

[By the way, I hope you don't mind my putting your letter in small caps, old style, but I always look for Lew letters first in zeens, and they are easier to find that way.]

(ALAN STEWART) Not an SF fan and so don't know about any Toronto collection, but I'd be happy to investigate if given a lead.

(LARRY PEERY) Julie, I have decided to name you as Chief Consort of IDS Under the Covenant if that is OK with Dick. That means when I croak you get to help Mike sort out all the Dippy junk in the garage /...ah,heh...Archives/. As such, you are entitled to sit between Dick and Robert on a coach in the publicity fotos for my next movie.

Actually, I've got a good collection of zeens in the Archives. The problem is that they weren't physically accessible. Well, thanx to Mike's good screwing, we now have 20 file cabinets and bookcases devoted to the Archives. By summer I hope to have it in order and by next year in usable form. Here's a first for you and a *HoL* exclusive to celebrate your taking over. Did you know that there is now 1 Dippy zeen in The Archives for each 1,000 books in the Library of Congress? That's right! there are 55 million books in the LOC and 55 thousand Dippy zeens in The Archives. At that rate...well, you figure it out. See, I promised you a scoop. I just didn't have a shovel big enough.

Anyway, the bottom line is that the Archives aren't worth a damn to you or anybody else until you want something. Then they suddenly become an invaluable resource.

(BILL SALVATORE) Funny thing about living in a country settled less than 500 years ago (*pace*, you Hispanics!), no one seems to have much sense of history. When *Politesse* was just starting up, Ed Wrobel was giving out free subs for as long as desired. So as not to feel *too* guilty about taking him up on this offer, I donated about ten pounds of old Diplo-rags (hey, that's twice I was able to avoid using that word which you're so arrogant as to change my spelling of—let's see if I can extend my streak!), which I had culled from wholesale purchases of old mags from people leaving the hex branch of the hobby, to the WARTHOG library, in exchange for a lifetime free sub to *Politesse*. (A

chintzy move, yes, but in my case "lifetime" might not be too long anyway, because I'm dreadfully overweight. Is there Diplomacy in Hell? Of course—almost by definition. Less relevantly to my future, is there Diplomacy in Heaven? Not if "there was silence in Heaven for the space of about half an hour"! When Mr Peel caught the falling torch, he cut off all us freeloaders. There are lots of details which I'm omitting here, but, in fine, I maintained that if I now had to pay for *Politesse*, I should get back my old *Toronto Telegrams*, etc, back from the WARTHOG library. Now, are you sitting down? Mr Peel couldn't honor my request because *Wrobel had thrown them out!* Obviously, the Archives concept will receive more support in a country which has a cultural history stretching back uninterrupted into the first millennium of the Common Era, hence Mr Walkerdine's 95% success rate.

[Yes, I remember that treasure trove. I went through that box of zeens at a con at Ed's house soon after he received them. Besides the wonderful *TTs*, I also remember a lot of the priceless *Le Front*. I asked Ed what he planned to do with the zeens, and he said they were "trash" and that anyone who wanted them could have them, but we couldn't pick and choose, we had to take the whole lot. And we already had a basement full of paper, so...you know the rest.]

(ROBERT SACKS) Let me give an example of how the Orphan Games Project would use an Archives. I get a call from somebody (probably Kathy Caruso) saying Graessle's zeen hasn't come out in six months. Neither she, nor I, nor anyone we talk to has the last several issues of his zeen (which we need for positions, supply charts, and player addresses), and Graessle doesn't answer letters (or answers defiantly—he didn't answer at all). If we had a functioning Archives, we could get all necessary information to restart the game from it with a minimal delay.

[Who will have sent the issues of the zeen to the Archives? The players who are using them to play the game? The lazy/defiant GM? Will the Archives have been kept up-to-the-minute, or rather more likely, will the zeens have collected for six months before being filed?]

(MARK NELSON) RJW's archives. The story behind these runs as follows...are we sitting comfortable? When RJW entered the hobby in 1971/2, it was still possible to get every zeen in the

UK. However, by 1974, this was proving to be very difficult, due to the so-called NGC boom. He handed his collection of zeens over to Mick Bullock (leading UK Dipster throughout the 70's) who was the hobby statistician. Mick added his own collection to it. As the hobby stat man, he traded with every zeen, and so the collection grew. In c. 1980, when Mick began to fade out, RJW added his trades to it. Richard thus thinks of the Archives as his own property, and this is the situation at the moment. In fact, the archives are his property. *But* should he drop out of the hobby, we may see a repeat of the earlier episode.

[And what was the so-called NGC boom?]

(KEN PEEL) I find the discussion of the British archives interesting. Walkerdine appears to have motives similar to Buchanan's. An archivist has to be someone who does the thing for the love of the process alone. Knowing that a nearly complete archive exists is somehow reassuring, is a comfortable thought, though I couldn't say just why. But it hardly serves any immediate purpose. Perhaps someday the North American hobby will again produce a Buchanan/Walkerdine type, but until then, why try to force a square peg in a round hole? As I said before, Melinda Holley could do it right...but then, Melinda could do *anything* right that she decided she wanted to do. And if she reestablished a true North American archives, she would have to cut back some on GMing and playing. Would Rod be ready for that? Would *any* of us?

[Rod's official position, speaking as head of the US Orphan Service, is (from a recent letter to Dick): "As for Melinda: Alas, I'm in no position to make glib judgements about who's running too many games. I expect GMs to know their own limits. (Yes, I know hobby history proves many of them don't—but if they don't how can I (or you) do so?)" Hey, Rod, we're no mindreaders.]

Burnout

(LARRY PEERY) Burnout can be cured and I've found the cure. One bottle of Grand Marnier, one bottle of B&B, and one bottle of Chambord, all consumed slowly over a period of months.

[How does this cure work: does it give you a better sense of perspective, or what? And what will cure the cure? More dip?]

Census

(LARRY PEERY) Census? Thanks, but no thanks. I would dream of interfering with Conrad's creative process. I always get a kick out of reading Simon's view of things. Can we swap him for Thatcher after the next election?

[I guess we can swap him, but how will we know the difference?]

(MARK NELSON) Steve Doubleday used to run a Player's Yearbook, or some such title, a few years back in the UK. It didn't attract much attention (c. 120 people registered) and has now folded. Of course, some of the IDA censuses included the UK and Europe. Why not the *BBB*? Perhaps it might encourage more of an intersection between what are at present two separate hobbies?

(KEN PEEL) Actually, I never thought that Conrad's approach to reviving the Census would work. He asked for pubbers to send him their sublists on an occasional basis, and he would retain the census on disk, available to anyone at any time on request. While that approach may seem workable theoretically, it could never function in the practical world. Probably quite a few pubbers sent him their sub lists when the original announcement went out (I know I did), but the follow up was lacking. As you know now, I am trying to revive the old cheap and simple "PDO" Census, which will list only subbers of amateur postal gaming zeens. I have received quite a few sub lists, and once 1) I get the *DW* list as well and 2) finish work on the current *Zeen Register*, I'll get it out to pubbers. Again, though, I don't claim that the census is exactly *good* for anything. I'm doing it only because of my own personal curiosity.

[It sounds like some problems with the census are identical with some problems of the archives: Who should do this kind of job? How up-to-date should it be kept? Is it really useful to anyone?]

[It occurs to me: doesn't Linsey already have a large database of PBMers, namely, the people who vote in The Poll? These are allegedly real people who are currently active in Dipdom. If you believe that, you might use the voter list as a foundation for your Census. If you disbelieve, you might use the independently compiled Census to check the voter list.

[I thought only Don Del Grande compiled statistics out of personal curiosity.]

Costs

(LARRY PEERY) Income will never cover costs in any typical Diplomacy zeen. Betcha.

[If income *did* cover costs, it wouldn't be a typical zeen. Gotcha.]

(DICK MARTIN) Unfortunately, the copy machine hasn't turned out to be quite the saving masterstroke I'd hoped for—too many repairs. Instead of paying for itself in three issues, it may take as many as five *Retals* before we actually start to see a real savings. That's not counting *HoL*, *Politesse* and anything else we may be publishing. Oh well, we should come out ahead in the long run. And the convenience is nice.

(ALAN STEWART) I'm now paying for my xeroxing. Happily I live near a university, and two copy shops are having a price war which has driven the price down to 3¢ per page—originally a self-service rate, but my run is big enough for them to do it for me and collate the thing as well. The need to collate always kept me from wanting a sub list larger than about 75—collating 75 copies was about all I could take. Now I'm going to start sending out samples to fresh blood and go for the big "100" if I ever get around to it.

[What happens when the price war is over (one shop is driven out of business), copies go back up to 10¢, and now you have 100 subbers? Big-time burnout, I've seen it before.]

(mark lew) kinko's is weird—it's like going to a different printer every month. i did *benzene* #6 at k and the guy there told me he couldn't do page 1 on colored paper and the other pages on white. i was in a hurry so i didn't argue, but that sounded pretty stupid to me.

[Kinko's is kinky—no surprise there.]

(PETE GAUGHAN) The IRS made it so difficult *and* expensive to be a non-profit corporation that it wasn't worth the benefit of reduced postal rates. Besides, we'd have to get too procedural.

We have three major print shops in town, two of which were quite happy to establish charge accounts for *Perelandra*. I rotate among the three—I convinced each one, independently, to charge me 5¢/side for plain white (10¢/side for the heavy, color covers). Each shop thinks they're getting my

business because they've offered the best rate...

So a single issue of *Perelandra* costs between 92¢ (12 pages) and \$1.29 (16 pages) plus mid-monthly reports, maps, and so forth. You got a copy of our financial statement with #57—much of our \$600+ loss in '87 was from sub refunds after the '86 hiatus.

Custodians

[The topic "Diptax" has been subsumed under the topic of "Custodians," since they have become so closely entwined.]

(STEPHEN DORNEMAN) Wearing my powdered wig as instructed (flea powder, of course), I take keyboard in hand to congratulate you on wresting control of *House of Lords* from the dastardly Dick Martin, and to reply to the recently-received missive.

Thanks muchly for the latest *HoL*—even if it did contain quite a few unsubstantiated allegations about myself and the office of Zarse Number Custodian (ZNC). I won't stoop so low as to respond to Jim Burgess' verbal assault upon my person—that's what I keep a lawyer on retainer for—but I would like to briefly reply to Dave McCrumb's comments and actions, and I hope finally to lay this matter to rest, quickly and efficiently. To wit:

The Sinking Creek Association of the National Diplomacy Action League (SCANDAL) has lost their jurisdiction in this matter. In 1985, when the Eastcoast Gamer's Organization (EGO) presidential election ended in a tie ballot and started the series of events that led to EGO's breakup into the International Diplomats (ID), SuperEGO, SCANDAL, and NERDS, SCANDAL was given control over the (now defunct) Gamemaster's University, while NERDS, according to the Compact, would administer any "monitoring bodies of East Coast gamer's behavior (surely this includes the Zarse Number Custodian!), if and only if SCANDAL does not properly continue the tradition of the Gamemaster's University." Therefore, since there is no School for SCANDAL, control of the ZNC is the revenge of the NERDS.

(JOHN CARUSO) The BNC doesn't charge money for a number. Please make that fact known. The BNC functions solely on donations and subs to *Everything* (and, as any pubber knows, pubbing is a losing proposition). The BNC doesn't collect

any money, let alone a dollar a game. You shouldn't make it sound like he does. ("Are they really worth a buck apiece?")

The purpose of the BNC is as a bookkeeper for regular game starts and finishes, by assigning a number. And reviewing any inquiries about whether a game violated regular dip game standards. (It is also commonly accepted as a highly prestigious figurehead position—if you will.)

I know the situation, but in case you don't: the problem isn't with registration. The problem is with who will oversee each custodianship. If you (as a custodian) want Robert Sacks as your successor or enforcer or inquisitor, that's your choice. Most of the other custodians do not. They disapprove of the Robert Sacks Factor. He has no authority over any service unless a custodian gives it to him, despite his attempts to claim otherwise.

His democratic ruling party is the NYGB and is hardly democratically selected. It's a group of "local" NYers selected at a FTF meeting of local NYers, with almost no hobby ties. And even less hobby cares. No PBM hobbyists or custodians are "polled" for their choices. Yet this so-called democratic body has seen fit to attempt to "control" independent hobby services through Robert Sacks. Once a custodian agrees to use Mr Sacks as his successor, assistant, or inquisitor, that custodianship forever loses its independence.

The three services that Robert Sacks now claims to control, that his NYGB funds are *KGO*, *KGO'ZD*, and Orphan Games Project.

[The way I see it, Robert has a lot of money that he would very much like to give to hobby services. But he has to answer to a higher authority, namely the IRS, as to the distribution of that money. All he asks is that those who receive funds follow the rules he has to follow, so that *he* stays within the bounds of the tax law. I don't think that's too much to ask, and I don't see that as an attempt by Robert to "control" hobby services. What are your requirements for services who wish to receive PDORA funding?

[Robert also writes lots of letters, and some of them concern services that he thinks are improperly run. He even campaigns against custodians he believes have shown themselves to be liars and crooks. But so do you and I. Would you call us "enforcers" and "inquisitors" too?

[As far as recognizing the prestige of the BNC—no, I don't. It depends on who is doing the job and how well. I admit, I got a little caught up in my own rhetoric when I asked if the BNs were worth a buck apiece, but my point was that

somewhere along the line, poor folks like Mr Hopcroft or Mr Nelson are getting the idea that the \$1 fee is mandatory. Something is being lost in the translation. I have definitely heard the phrase "customary, but not necessary." Now you're telling me that the BNC doesn't collect any money at all! Since when?

[And, let us not forget my other point, still unanswered: what's to prevent a future BNC from charging \$1 a number, mandatory fee. Or will we accept that?]

(PETE GAUGHAN) Gawd, I'm tired of discussions about custodians. I keep trying to enjoy my games and zeen, do my custodial jobs (Dipcon and the USOS) and ignore the conversations about who's what—but it's so hard *not* to read it.

The US Orphan Service Treasury has \$239.29 as of February 29 (the Treasury shares a checking account with *Perelandra*). Rod has a bundle of money himself for the USOS which is *not* included in that figure.

Personally, I have no idea why anyone would want such detailed procedural crap as the NYGB goes through, and "professionally" I'm glad I don't have to worry about it with either service I'm in.

[As you said under "Costs," the one who *wants* detailed procedural crap is the IRS. I have a friend in the IRS who right now is investigating—guess what?—science fiction cons. There are simply very strict rules on what is a profit or a non-profit organization, what is a "social" and what is an "educational" con. You don't wanna mess with the IRS.]

(ROBERT SACKS) If the future BNC can charge a fee, then the office is not eligible for NYGB support. We're not interested in bribing an officer to do what he should do anyhow, and we don't see how we could do that without violating the tax code. We're interested in funding an office secure in the knowledge that it will continue to operate properly.

Hyatt couldn't charge a fee for a Miller Number even if he wanted to, because he doesn't assign Miller Numbers; he assigns Walker numbers, which are unsuitable for the purpose.

How the Split came to be (in a nutshell): in order to control the variant hobby and break the Covenant which prohibited mandatory fees, the North American Variant Bank came up with a new designator system that was so bad that the MNC couldn't maintain it, so control over the designators would have to be transferred to the NAVB. When

the MNC decided not to adopt the new arrangement, the NAVB pulled repeated coups. When the next MNC, allegedly acceptable to both sides, failed to hand out either set of numbers for an extended period, the removal procedure in the Covenant was invoked, and he claimed not to have succeeded the valid MNC, but rather the NAVB Director, and denied being the MNC under the Covenant. Since then, the NAVB has repeatedly denied that a Covenant could be written that would be binding (*i.e.*, that they would have to honor and abide by) and the Covenanters have denied that the variant banks and their pretenders are anything more than common crooks.

Anyone having questions about me are best directed to ask me directly. Fred and I get along fine, as long as he behaves himself; unfortunately, he repeatedly confuses tolerance and good nature with weakness and approval....

Woody and I get along fine, as long as Kathy Caruso isn't there to goad him on.

If the MNC (Covenant or pretended) were playing in a gunboat game, the transmission of the player list to him/her would have to wait until the game ended.

I have been bothered for some time about listing, in the *KGO* Directory of Hobby Services, persons whose misconduct is so gross that I do the Hobby a disservice in listing them, especially since copies of *KGO* are distributed with the *DW* Novice Sampler. I therefore request that you discuss the following three advisory propositions for an issue or two, and then poll the Lords. I will abide by the advice given.

Proposition 1: For gross misconduct, Bruce Linsey should not be considered a hobby officer, and should no longer be listed in the *KGO* Directory of Hobby Services.

Proposition 2: For gross misconduct, Fred Davis Jr should not be considered a hobby officer, and should no longer be listed in the *KGO* Directory of Hobby Services.

Proposition 3: For gross misconduct, Fred Hyatt should not be considered a hobby officer, and should no longer be listed in the *KGO* Directory of Hobby Services.

If the question is not discussed in the Lords, I will have to put the question to the Hobby Meeting at the Diplomatic Congress of Baltimore this year and ask that the same question be put to the Hobby Meeting at Dipcon which is taking place the same weekend. (If the matter is not discussed in either the Lords or at Dipcon, I'll have to rely on the advice from the Diplomatic Congress.)

[Well, Robert, I've always thought that one of

your charms was that you *do* list alternative hobby services, instead of following the Dark Side practice of only recognizing "our own." And I'm surprised that you'd ask anyone to run a poll on anything.

[I've never considered Bruce Linsey a "hobby officer"—he runs a poll, not a service.]

(ALAN STEWART) Your description of the MNC controversy, which had Fred Hyatt giving out "North American Variant Bank Numbers," was a little twisted, wasn't it? Never can tell when you're being serious and when you're not.

Election of custodians—p.u., what a horrible idea. Right now, people who have nasty things to say about custodian-aspirants can keep their dirty stories confined among the small number of people who are interested in this type of thing. With elections, all the dirty stuff would have to be spread all around the hobby. How is the average Joe Blow (I almost said "dreg") supposed to know who would make the best Orphan Service guy or MNC? In a situation of factional war, you would have the superior electioneering side controlling all the offices and trying to run the other side out of the hobby—and stifle yourself if you were about to say that that's what happens anyway, because I don't think it is.

Ah yes, at last—can you please tell me just who the "In Six" are? Always wondered, and I might be able to guess three or four names, but the whole six I never could figure out.

[Well, Rod Walker invented the term...but I'm afraid it's one of those cases where if you have to ask, you wouldn't understand the answer anyway.]

(MARK NELSON) When I said "deprived of its BN," I meant to say "declared irregular." Over here any games that are irregular when they start (in fourteen years I can't think of any!) would probably not be given a BN. Isn't giving BNs to games which are declared irregular on start merely a way of boosting up your number of game starts to the UK level? Isn't it rather underhanded? Aren't the BN rules printed in *Everything* 74 silly, pointless, and a load of rubbish in any case? Do irregular games get Miller Numbers as well?

If I were MNC and just happened to be in a gunboat game, I would assign a number without asking for the player list until the end of the game. But heck, it's only a number—it isn't as if variants should be or are rated.

I'm not quite sure how the MNC is supposed to promote the variant sub-hobby. I'm not sure that promotion of the variant banks doesn't promote the

VSH. Surely a strong series of banks backed up by active custodians = a strong VSH? I read with interest an article Fred C Davis has sent me on the history of the VSH (published in *Diplomacy World* 27), especially the comments on page 22 dealing with the time when Mr Sacks was an MNC. At least now the main members of the VSH in the separate parts of the world are in contact with each other.

I don't pay for my BNs, MNs, WNs, TNs, NNs...if I did, I would be soon be very poor. And I would also be very silly.

[Too many abbreviations! It took me a minute to realize VSH meant "variant sub-hobby," referred to in the previous sentence. What are all these Ns?

["Irregular" games do not get Miller Numbers, variant games do. You can have an "irregular" variant too, if someone cheats.

[Did you not get a copy of my latest *Lord of Hosts*? Dave McCrumb has invented a system for rating gunboat games.]

(KEN PEEL) Okay, here's a little damper on the fire. BNC maybe, USOS possibly, but other than that, I have trouble discerning any other clear hobby "service" or "custodian." In my view, anyone who claims to be the only legitimate custodian of an indispensable hobby service should do a little introspective contemplation on the meaning of the State of Anarchy (hey, that's just left and a little south of Idaho, isn't it?).

BN's mean something for two reasons: to keep statistics on where we are relative to where we have been, and to serve as raw material for ratings keepers and statisticians. Both of those purposes are enhanced by there being one acknowledged central source for providing BN's and keeping as comprehensive a record as possible. Now, while there are plenty of people who put the product of the BNC to some good use, I notice a few regular games out there that don't "do" BNs, so I wonder: are the players in those games having an experience inferior than those in fully BN-compatible games? Probably not. On the other hand, if any of those players *wanted* a BN for their game, is there anything keeping them from seeking one? Not that I know of.

Now on the USOS, it really is nice knowing that there are people out there who will help you move your game if a GM flakes out on you. And the more widely known the better, because often times a fold (or serious brown out) will occur in the Dipdom's periphery. So, one central source again can be justified on the basis of enhanced volunteer GMs

and general promotion. But it is hardly absolutely written in the cards. A fair amount of pubbers fold and house their games with GM's they know and trust, without ever touching the USOS. But there's no question that a central acknowledged source of help, well, helps.

Now, beyond that, monolithic claims start to wear thin. Obviously, this is the point where we move, with considerable trepidation, to the question of the Miller Number Custodian. Purely speaking, the MNC parallels the BNC, variant for regdip. But the actual uses of game numbers and statistics is far more tenuous for variants than for regular Diplomacy. Frankly, though, whatever use there is for variant game records — and I am beginning to see ratings attempts for several popular variants, such as Colonia — is significantly lessened the more the function is fractured and confused. I have read much about the origin of the MNC vs. MNC/UC split, and to me it seems to be nothing more than a tempest in a teapot which bears no relevancy to the situation we have today. (Of course, I would argue that it never beared any relevancy to anything at any time.)

The question is simply this: is there any useful purpose to having two providers of MNs and keepers of variant statistics? Or rather, is there any issue important enough to require establishing an MNC office separate from the generally recognized office (at least in the pre-“Karel Alaric” days)? Another related question is does the existence of rival MNC's hurt anything? In my view, the answer to the three questions is 1) no, 2) give me a break!, and 3) probably not.

All other issues asside, whether there are one or nine MNC's, whatever utility of what they are doing would be enhanced by completeness. One MNC would be the best way to ensure the most comprehensive statistics, but lacking rationalization of the MNC situation, an alternative would be for you and Fred to “recategorize” each other's work in addition to giving out your own original MN's. That way, who gives the original number wouldn't matter much, since the entire ground (at least among pubbers who go to the trouble of registering their variant games) is being covered either originally or secondarily by each of you. A confused situation, yes, and that returns us to the question of why you two people need to duplicate each other in the first place, but that is your and Fred's business, not mine, and no one is forced to register their games with either of you. And who knows: maybe someone really will be put MNs to a useful purpose some day...stranger things have happened.

(BILL SALVATORE) I disagree with Simon Billenness re the power of a custodian to bind successors (naturally I'd think the reverse from him; he's SB and I'm BS—straight lines my specialty). If a custodian thinks that a certain arrangement is necessary in order to preserve the usefulness of the service, it should be carved in stone. Anyone who doesn't agree should refuse to become a successor and/or start a competing hobby service. What the heck, it's all in fun—but, hey, what isn't? as the ZNC would say. Shows how much he has yet to learn.

Diptax? Needless. If a hobby service is useful, and has expenses, the custodian should suggest a voluntary contribution. If unwilling to make that contribution, the person wanting to use the service will either forgo it, or offer the service for less. (I'm worried that this statement may appear to be so moderate and sensible as to disqualify me from entrance into the elite world of Megadipdom.)

[Oh, you needn't worry about that! Anyone who dares suggest that people should be allowed to forgo services they don't want or set up services competing with the existing bastions of the Hobby Establishment should worry more about being shot on sight.]

(DICK MARTIN) It's all well and good to talk hypothetically about custodian succession, but when it comes down to it the successor for a defunct custodian is usually someone that just steps up and starts doing the job. If someone is busy fighting for the title of This and That Custodian, they're not doing the job and will fade away into irrelevance soon enough anyways. Smooth successions aren't really important in Dipdom, when it comes right down to it. An election in dipdom would be a farce, almost by definition.

Simon misses a point on the covenant question. If a custodian was to invent some particularly ridiculous restriction for his successors, the potential successor is not *bound* to accept the job. If you don't like it, just don't *do* it.

(LARRY PEERY) I've been debating for months who the biggest fools are: those who support the DipTax or those who oppose it. I only wish that those who are so good at telling others what to do and how to spend their money would pitch in and do some of the work. Then we wouldn't need a DipTax.

By my calculations, we now have more titles for hobby members holding various jobs than we do hobby members. I myself have 17 different titles.

What I would like to do is a survey and find out everyone's hat size. Those with the biggest heads would get the biggest titles. I wear a 7 1/8, by the way.

[Hobby Hat Size Custodian...that makes 18 titles....]

Dipcon

(LARRY PEERY) Ah *Dipcon*, a *World Dip Con*, ah! I'm going to both, silly fool that I am. I'm in a state of shock at having to pay \$300 for a room with a private bath in London during the summer, but it does include an English breakfast (fit for a queen?), and a warm towel rack, and a pants-presser. The important thing is to get things done regularly, get people to go, and start building some traditions. The rest will follow in time. Some people will always want the presidential suite and some will always sleep on the floor of the lobby; but all will always want to play Diplomacy and gossip about who is—and isn't—there.

(ALAN STEWART) A "Worldcon Charter" would have no particular problems...after all, British and American corporations contract all the time, and seem to be able to solve conflict-of-forum problems. Usually the "contract" will specify what law would govern, but if it doesn't, there are rules to determine this, and in any case, the common law of the two countries is similar enough to mean that 90% of provisions would be interpreted the same way anyway. I know this problem is totally irrelevant to the real world, but Peter Sullivan started it.

Frank Easton and Randy Grigsby are thinking of organizing a Toronto con for next summer. We'll see how it goes. They were going to hold it on the same weekend as San Antonio Dipcon. In my capacity as Hobby Wise Man, I was able to convince them that this was a perfect way to turn people off, even if there wouldn't be much overlap between the likely attendees of the two cons.

(ROBERT SACKS) A charter not repugnant to law in the US and the UK is binding on the organization and enforceable at law, if people want to spend the money. The charter might even specify that it was drawn and is subject to the laws of a particular jurisdiction. In the same way, a charter or covenant for a hobby officer is binding—in effect, it establishes a legal trust or unincorporated

"corporation sole."

The Diplomatic Congress would probably be interested in hosting a World Dipcon. The problem is that since we are ourselves a hosted convention, we only know six to eight months in advance when and where we are going to be.

If you need a committee to decide the location/host for a North American World Dipcon, may I suggest Davis, Hyatt, Martin, and Sacks, in our capacities as the MNC disputants?

[Really, Robert, don't we have enough to do?]

(MARK NELSON) World Dip Con. Since the idea is (i) to use it as an excuse to go for a holiday abroad and (ii) a chance to meet some foreign dipsters, a yearly WDC would seem to defeat the whole point. What would be the point in holding a WDC if only a few internationals came along—it would be no different from ManorCon or Dipcon. If WDC is not held at the same site as Dipcon, then isn't there the possibility that there could be a clash of conventions? Shouldn't we put a little thought into avoiding such a clash? Perhaps WDC sites could be chosen along a similar line as WorldCons? WDC will probably turn out to be a special interest con, so what? Dipsters with international contacts are more likely to make the big one, those with no such contacts are less likely—after all, cons are more about meeting people than gaming. And boy, can't we have some attractions...watch Hopcroft mugged by the gathering Bad Boys...watch the old biddies Sacks & Davis throw punches...watch alternative MNCs being thrown to the lions...

[I'm not sure how many internationals you're going to get at World Dipcons anyway. I recall Australia being listed as a possible site. Well, I just heard on TV last night that airfare to Australia from the West Coast is \$1000, and it's an eighteen-hour flight. Add another \$1000 and three hours for East Coasters to get to the West Coast. Damn, Australia is the one place in the world I really want to see, but at that rate, I'll never make it.]

(PETE GAUGHAN) Enclosed is another Dipcon flyer. Could you please reprint it, or at least tell folks I'll send 'em one?

What are you asking about, "Texas Dipcon"? If you mean Origins in Dallas ('84—Dipcon XVII), we had (shuffle, shuffle) 91 Dip players (compared to 110 or so the year before, 63 in 1985). The problem was not lack of bodies, it was lack of enthusiasm and organization. Seattle ('85—Dipcon

XVIII) was the smallest Dipcon in the past decade, but was one of the best due to the excitement shared by hosts and guests—not to mention the non-stop gaming (22 total boards of Diplomacy!).

San Antonio, this summer, should be nearly as exciting as Seattle (hey, we're doing a *great* job in spite of no Tallman, no Langleys, and no Bob "Death Wish" Seki). July 4 is probably the best time of year to be in central Texas—clear skies, but not yet into the 100s.

(Computers and) Filing Systems

(PETE GAUGHAN) I think you need to move letters about computers into a new heading—Computers!

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) I ended up getting a British IBM clone for about \$800. I ended up using First Publisher, and so far I'm getting decent results. I'm not supposed to be Up To Modern Graphics Standards anyway, and I'll be living up to that still.

(KEN PEEL) Phew! Good thing Hopscotch got the no-name MS-DOS clone rather than an Atari ST. Inferior (the former, not the latter) in every respect except for the ability to run Computer Diplomacy (Hyork! Hyork!).

(LARRY PEERY) Good GMs are born, not made.

[A computer can turn a fair GM into a good GM, if he can figure out how to use it.]

(BRUCE GERYK) Assuming I write you again, would it be easier for you if I just sent a disk with my letter in MacWrite?

[You bet. It would be easier for me if everybody sent a disk or modemed in their letters, but unfortunately, it can't happen.]

Finding New Subbers

(LARRY PEERY) New subbers are easy to find. I've got one in Afghanistan that wants to pay me in used Stinger rockets. Anyone want him???

(KEN PEEL) Say, Julie, has anyone else caught on yet to Dick's gold mine? I notice that he is strangely quiet about his awesome PowerNovice position.

[Shhh...]

(DICK MARTIN) My problem isn't so much finding new subbers as keeping them away! I'm running about as many games as I can now, and more players just keep finding me. I'd suggest a new topic of "finding new pubbers" but that gets into *KGO* territory....

GMing Procedure

(ROBERT SACKS) Let's take a look at *Graustark*: Boardman runs umpteen games, all with a deadline of the mail delivery Saturday about noon. He has to get the zeen done that afternoon, before his collators depart, and hopefully get to a postbox for a late Saturday pick-up. Unlike many of the younger publishers, his zeen is typed by hand, not computer-produced, and therefore not easily changed. Unlike other younger publishers, he types directly onto stencils (not easily changed) and pages have to dry before they can be back-printed; photocopied zeens can be extensively modified prior to copying, and there is no delay in back-printing. So, as the orders come in, he adjudicates each game as it is full, and prepares and runs off stencils as he goes. If he receives a change in orders before the deadline, he publishes a correction. Other old-style GMs (Charles Reinsel comes to mind, but this is history and my memory is poor) didn't allow orders to be changed at all. If he was prohibited from typing adjudications before the deadline, either the zeen would be frequently late, the deadline would have to be moved up, or the deadline would have to be lengthened; none of these options are particularly desirable.

(ALAN STEWART) Me, write up something on the different kinds of press? Hell, I just cut the stuff out and paste it into the zeen. What they write is what you get. You can encourage press by printing all of it, not editing it (well, I do delete certain profanities-sorry, folks), and not lecturing press writers about the goodness or badness of what they write. After that it just depends on, ahem, who contributes.

John Boardman's pretyping isn't ideal, granted, and it can be quite a shock the first time you find

your changed-at-the-last minute orders being printed for the whole world to see. It's just the price you pay for having a multi-game zeen that is always sent out right after the deadline. It can be helpful on occasion—when you change your orders at the last minute to conform to an ally's suggestion, you've got proof! I'm a little uncomfortable about my own method of selecting standbys because I really don't have one. I just look at the list and pick a name—considering maybe how keen the guy is to be a standby, how many other games he's in, how often he's been called before, etc. I couldn't even swear that I don't give the better positions to people who've gotten bad ones before, or to people who seem likely to be active diplomats. If I did this, would it be GM interference? I do keep track of who's been called before in the game and give people the same country if they've been called before for it and keep them out if they've been called for a different country.

If two removal orders are given where only one is due, remove the first one listed reading left-to-right and up-to-down. This one was in *KK*, wasn't it?

[How very observant of you. Dick proposed that question in *KK*.]

(STEPHEN DORNEMAN) I personally find that whether a game has good press depends entirely upon the existence in the game of one of the few players who writes press regularly and often and who has something to say—something that begs for a reply and starts other players writing. They can be good players or bad players—but they write, and getting started is half the battle. Now how to create and encourage players like that—now there's a problem.

(MARK NELSON) Press...what is a bad game? The only way a GM should try to correct the imbalance is to put good press writers in the same game rather than in separate games. Let them spark and flash ideas at each other. What's worse than only one good press writer in a game? Don't know, guv.

I am surprised to hear that Bob Olsen objects to WAP because it "encourages poor play, especially NMRs." I always thought that the American system of using standbys encouraged poor play and NMRs. Hence the American system favors poor players against good players. Isn't Diplomacy a game between *seven players* and not seven powers?

[Where's my rule book? If I remember correctly,

it starts off with something like, "Diplomacy is a game between seven powers..."]

(BILL SALVATORE) I wonder who declared the order "F (GOB)-StP" invalid and illegal, and why?

[Good question. I would certainly allow it.]

(DICK MARTIN) Where did I read that Larry Peery has proposed a minimum game fee? I hope that's just rumor, because it's about the silliest thing I've ever heard. For one thing, it's unenforceable. For another, some people (like me) don't charge game fees—never had it, never will. And what would be the purpose?

(PETE GAUGHAN) Secret-ballot draws—these are dumb. If you're playing Dip with six friends and lots of liquor, you're a deadhead???—er, I mean, you'd *never* hold a secret ballot. If the game continues, *everybody* knows who's holding it up.

(MARK BERCH) Bob Olsen says, "Everyone seems disappointed by Mr. Heinowski's ruling in the WAP matter." That's not true. I most certainly am not disappointed in his decision, and I rather like the way he presented his decision in the context of other GMing practices. Presumably, Alan Stewart is not disappointed, since he has other game openings for it, and those signed up for the game are unlikely to be disappointed. Incidentally, I think his implication that Steve decided that way simply to allow the issue to be ended is shabby.

Bob Gossage says, "Yes, the orders were written by the player, but not for that season." Yes, the orders were written for the earlier season, *but not JUST the earlier season*. When a player intentionally signs up for a WAP game, he does so with the specific intent that his orders are to be used *not only* for that season (unless superseded by later orders, of course), but as tentative orders for the next season (unless superseded by later orders, of course). A similar point is raised by John Caruso: "With regard to perpetual orders...it is the player who has ordered the GM to use this method of order writing. In the case of WAP, it is the GM telling the player which set of orders he (the GM) will use." John calls this GMing rules "that border on GM interference." But where does this distinction come from, since the GM's actual actions are exactly the same in both cases? In both cases, the GM, acting in accordance with his HR, uses the same orders for another season. Or suppose the player appends with

his S06 orders a note saying, "Please consider these orders as tentative orders for F07." If nothing further comes in, nearly all GMs, I assume, would reuse the orders—again, the exact same physical act as in the two above cases. WAP houserules simply generate such a note automatically each season.

John goes on to say, "It may be a HR and one that was agreed to before the game started by all the players, but it is a rule that indirectly allows the GM to perform the function of a player in the game. The player didn't order the units to use WAP." Oh yes he did. When he or she signs up for a WAP game, he is having his units use WAP. And the GM is not performing a player function. The player can create any orders his little heart desires. He has total discretion. The GM not only lacks total discretion, she has none at all. She *must* reuse the old orders.

The situation is somewhat similar to when the three players all vote for a two-way draw, and the GM voids it, citing the HRs which state DIAS. Would John Caruso argue that "the GM is telling the player" what his vote is? Would Caruso argue that this "indirectly allows the GM to perform the function of the player"—after all, voting in a draw is just as much a player prerogative as creating orders, right? Moreover, in WAP, the GM is just following the players' instructions (again). With DIAS, he's actually going against the vote.

John says that a player could just as well write, "Please use my previous season's orders if I NMR." Right, but when a player knowingly signs up for a WAP game, he is saying that that is exactly how he wants every season to be handled—just as a player signing up for a DIAS game says this is how he wants every draw vote handled.

Mark Nelson says, "The solution would be..." and then gives essentially what is the common hobby practice. That's fine, but that is a solution to a different problem. That's the solution to the problem of "how do we prevent the *second* all-units-hold season." WAP looks to the problem of preventing the *first* occurrence of all-units-hold.

Bob Olsen says that "from a purely selfish viewpoint, since I at least get my orders in...WAP favors my opponents rather than me..." Mark Nelson indirectly makes a related point. An NMR with all-units-hold does indeed damage the game—it means that the game is, say, only 3/4 being played. But the all-units-hold can (and usually does) favor one or two other players. Actually, it does this in a somewhat arbitrary manner, since rarely does a non-neighbor reap benefit.

The same argument was made back in the 1960s, against the idea of using replacement players. After all, the replacement player prevents

those who can "at least get my orders in" from benefiting from a whole string of all-units-hold seasons—it limits him to just one season of such a benefit. In North America (but not in Britain, by and large), it was felt that a better game resulted from holding these all-units-hold seasons to just one. But it seems to me that if it's a legitimate goal to prevent the second, third, etc, season of all-units-hold, then it's also a legitimate goal to prevent the first one as well. Of course, you might not like the method to reach the goal, but that is a separate issue. However, I believe that it has less GM involvement than other methods that have been used because it strips the GM of any discretion. In neutral orders, the most common method for forestalling the first all-units-hold outcome, the GM actually creates the orders to be used, rather than using those created by the player. In general orders, the GM must select a person to create the orders, and may have to decide if those created orders are faithful to the general orders. NMR insurance gives the GM the option of how many times to call (if he calls at all—NMR insurance does not ordinarily obligate the GM to call). Of course, any given player or GM might not like any of those methods either. But I don't hear anyone saying that, e.g., neutral orders "border on GM interference" or arguing that games with NMR insurance are somehow irregular.

There, Julie, I've responded to everyone who wrote on the topic.

[You're pleased with Heinowski's decision? What decision? He didn't make one. He said it will have to be decided on a situational (maybe even game-by-game) basis whether or not WAP makes the game irregular. He wimped out, plain and simple. He made a ruling that was not a ruling at all so that he could say that he had fulfilled his duty as BNC and quash further argument. I think his treatment of the problem was pretty shabby.]

[If I remember correctly, Caruso *has* argued before with Dick that DIAS is a form of GM interference, just as you have outlined above.]

[If you didn't hear me saying before that neutral and general orders border on GM interference, then you weren't listening.]

[At least some GMs who provide NMR insurance specify that they will only make one call.]

[I suppose you can't help it, but it must be terrible to go through life being so literal-minded. It's almost like being blind in one eye or deaf in one ear; you're really missing out on a lot. There's a world of difference between not singling people out and answering every single person. Are you too literal-minded to understand that? Then never mind.]

[Thank you for presenting an excellent analysis and argument in favor of WAP.]

(DICK MARTIN) The GM isn't interfering any more in WAP games than in more traditional games. After all, he's not *writing* the moves to be used. Spring 01 neutral moves and "neutral moves by a local player" for NMRs (systems now fallen into disuse) are far more intrusive than WAP, and were in use for years. I'd just as soon see a couple WAP games played, and find out what the players think of the system after experiencing it. I bet they'll hardly notice. If the system is so bad it'll die a quick death. If it *does* turn out to be an improvement, then it's everybody's gain.

In fact, I may just run a WAP game one of these days when I have openings again. That and a prophetic build/retreat game. I'd like to see how they work first hand.

(mark lew) so what's wrong with "gm interference" anyway? for that matter, how can a gm *not* interfere? he reads orders, sets deadlines, reports coas, etc. the role of the gm is to promote the smooth operation of the game (else why have him). the gm who doesn't interfere at all isn't doing his job.

i don't understand why everyone is stuck on *laissez-faire* gming. if, for instance, your gm phones one of your opponents to clarify an order which appears to be inadvertently miswritten, doesn't that enhance the game? don't you want a gm who will provide a good game? i do.

(MICHAEL HOPCROFT) GM interference is an interesting question in role-playing games. FTF it happens all the time: a good GM will usually give the player-characters a chance to stop doing something really stupid before he lets them have it. As for me, I "interfere" to the extent of wondering why a turn isn't there after a few weeks. Just yesterday I called up Cathy Ozog to ask her whether her character was going to a particular place. Why? Because I hadn't heard from her in a while, I was going to get a turn out, and it just so happened that my next step in the campaign plot line had to do with that lecture. If she hadn't gone, I would have told her about it next turn.

Letter Columns

(STEPHEN DORNEMAN) If you don't have a word processor, put one together with a

sharp pair of scissors. If a pubber gets 20 letters in response to an issue, those letters aren't going to be about 20 different subjects. Cut up the letters and group the sections by topic (as you do in *HoL*) so that it appears a number of conversations is taking place—a PBM cocktail party. Much easier for the reader to follow the various threads under discussion that way, and a find excuse to cut out the dull bits without hurting anybody's feelings. [Well there goes the rest of your letter.]

(JOHN CARUSO) The only way to have a letter column is to let it "flower" on its own. After all, *KK* didn't start at 16 pages. It started at 1/2 page. But sometimes, you have to add water, sun, and nutrients to gain the flower. Ah—but what kind of flowers are you trying to grow? Like Julie pointed out, when she tried to start a letter column in *Retal*, she tried for roses and got black-eyed susans. You have to guide your letter column in the direction you want it to go, without controlling its actual input or turning people off. It's a fine line to follow, but if you enjoy what you're doing, pick and allow topics of interest to you, and handle people fairly despite having your own opinion on a topic, your letter column will flower.

(LARRY PEERY) I've never encouraged letter columns—and I try not to participate in them—because I'm too much of a wind bag (Betcha buck nobody else will admit to that!). I do save all my correspondence and I've got copies of all my letters. Someday I'm going to have fun with it all.

Good letter columns let people have their say and share last words rights co-equally with the correspondents. It's easy. The problem is that some people don't express themselves well on paper, whether in letter or any other form, so letter columns deprive them from participating in the hobby's on-going dialogue. Fortunately, for Ma Bell, those people usually like to chat on the phone. Now if we could just record and transcribe what they say. And if we could pry the thoughts out of people like David Lincoln who won't write or talk but who do an awful lot, we'd be in great shape. My policy is to let each party have their say without cut or without comment, and then I have my say and my say and my say. By the time I'm through, everyone is either bored to death or asleep. Either way, it solves the problem.

I've got an idea, although I'm not sure you would like it or if the hobby would either. How about some one-on-one debates on various topics of controversy between two leading figures on each side (or three or four). The topic and participants

would be announced in one issue, questions solicited from the readers, and each participant would see the responses of the other (and have right of reply) before each publication. Is that too structured or too bloody?

(BILL SALVATORE) "Timely publication" is the key—nothing is staler than a diatribe which events have passed by.

[Interesting you should say that. When Dick finally published *HoL* #7 after a two-year hiatus, many people commented on how relevant the material still was. One of the letters in this issue was actually written in October, 1987, and finally mailed to me in February, after last issue. It sounds current enough to me. Can you identify the "stale" letter?]

Out of Dipdom

(ALAN STEWART) I avoid describing Dip to strangers whenever possible. If the guy's a Gamer, he's already heard of it; otherwise, it always comes out sounding weird.

(KEN PEEL) One of the strangest out of Dipdom experiences was when I was junketing through the U.S. embassy in Warsaw this January. Early one morning, on the way to the super-secret spy-proof "room within a room" at the embassy to read super-secret burn-before-reading cables (containing information I had read in the New York Times weeks earlier) in preparation for a super-secret meeting, I bumped into this table—hey, what can I say? I was still waiting for the coffee to brew and I was seriously afflicted from time zone shock.

Anyway, hip and table get things together and lo and behold, a little green block falls on the floor. Through the haze it dawned on me that I had just upset a Diplomacy board in the early stages of the Great War. I felt terrible, of course (although I am sure that the poor Turk would have thanked me), and left my business card with a sufficiently contrite note. Less than 15 minutes later (and we're talking 7:30 AM here) I passed by the table again, and the moves were restored. Now, as far as I could tell, There were only about three other people in the embassy besides myself at that time, and there was no one at all in the room, or even on that hall. E-oo-E-oo... And that gives me an idea on a new special interest zeen, though mum's the word for now...

(mark lew) to the uninitiated, risk *looks* like diplomacy, and chess *looks* like checkers. thus the analogy.

(BILL SALVATORE) Surely it doesn't make sense to say that Diplomacy is to Risk as chess is to checkers. Both the elements and the rules of checkers are less complex than those of chess, and the two games use (conceptually) different boards, and both eschew random elements. D has more complex rules than R, but the rest of the relationships are different from that between chess and checkers: D has much simpler elements, the boards are conceptually very similar, and differ about the use of random elements. Another way in which the relationship between C & C is very different from that between D & R is that the talents needed to play C & C (spatial visualization almost exclusively, witness an *idiot-savant* like Bobby F) are almost identical, whereas R requires less talent for diplomacy and more for estimating the results than does D. It would make more (though still not much) sense to say that D is to R as checkers is to chess.

[Chess is a game of spatial visualization, you say? Maybe that's why I play chess so much better on a 2-D (computer) board than a 3-D one. Women are supposedly less adept at spatial relationships than men, although I'm better than Dick at figuring whether a box will fit in a certain space, as long as the "box" is not a car, and the "space" is not a parking space.]

(ROBERT SACKS) I once tried to teach my late grandmother Chess. When I demonstrated the Knight's move, she accused me of cheating. I wonder how she would have reacted to Castling and Capturing *en passant*.

[When my father taught me chess, he left out *en passant*. I don't know if he knew about it or not.]

(MARK NELSON) I went to the Leeds SF group a few weeks ago, and one member was passing around some filk (and no, that's not a spelling mistake) songs. Some of the 1960s ones were "written" by an American called John Boardman...given the early links between SF and dip fandom, I wonder...

[Yeah, it's the same guy. He sometimes publishes words for new filksongs in one of his zeens, *Dagon*, I think?]

Polls

(PETE GAUGHAN) Is the Marco Poll still alive? I'll run it if it's not.

[It's dead, Jim. I doubt Mark Larzelere would mind you reincarnating it.]

(MARK NELSON) Having seen Bruce's add-on to *HoL* 14, I sent some comments on *The Poll* to him direct. Rereading *HoL* 14, it struck me that a number of people weren't being very constructive. They were coming out with rather general criticisms which weren't backed up by any examples. Come on, folks—please give examples. If you want Bruce to ignore your comments as a load of rubbish, then please continue to write general criticisms.

The UK has a number of polls (including the Poll Poll). Indeed the zeen poll has caused two new polls to come into being. Perhaps the reason there is only The Poll in the States is because it is easier to criticize someone else's poll than to run your own?

Average votes, do they work? Look at the standard deviation man, the sd man. There is a point in tabulating the number of people who voted 4 for any particular zeen—to see if they really did mean different things. It's interesting going through the UK Poll seeing which zeens attracted a spread of votes (large sd) and which zeens attracted a classic distribution of votes (low sd). Perhaps The Poll should give sd's? Paul Milewski's suggestion of picking your best zeen is one which has been used in a modified form several times in the UK.

However, it rather discriminates against people who see a large number of the better zeens against those that only see a few of the trash zeens, such as *YddG*. Shouldn't people be allowed to say how they think zeens compare, and isn't the preference matrix the best way of doing that very same thing?

Discounting votes from certain quarters...is very impractical. And, if anything, would lead to a worse situation than the present one. I'd simply forward names I know don't like my zeen, or names of people who wouldn't give it a good vote. It would be possible to exclude non-subbers and subbers from voting.

The reason a pollster has to refuse to tell any particular editor who voted for him is because if he does this for one editor, then he has to do this for every editor. Hey, do you think if I get every pubber in the UK to give some publicity to the Poll, we will all get a copy of the results? Yea, get the Aussie editors to give it publicity as well!

[Linsey's mass mailing was *not* an add-on to my zeen, and I object to his use of my logo which implies that I sanction his mailing. I do not. He chooses not to write to this zeen—that's his problem. You want to send your comments to him direct—that's your problem. You want to participate in an open forum—send your comments to me, not Bruce.

[There have been, and continue to be, other polls in the US besides Linsey's. Maybe you haven't heard about them because the people who run them do them for fun and interest, instead of using them as a tool in a feud. Did you know that right before Linsey grabbed the poll, he was rejected as an applicant for the BNC because he was too controversial? If he had got the BNC instead of the poll, I imagine today we would be talking about how Linsey had declared all non-WAP games irregular, instead of criticizing the poll.

[Gee, Mark, can you explain to us why there is a Rusty Bolt award called "The Nelson's Eye Award for the Least Accurate Observation of the Year"?

[What is *YddG*?]

(TOM SWIDER) It doesn't surprise me to hear people still bickering about the Leeder Poll. It was better when an "unknown Canadian" (one without an axe to grind or who could be conceived of having said axe) ran it. I personally believe that Bruce's profile interferes too much, and despite the hard work going into the poll, that he should give the poll to someone else. This will not occur, and the boycott ensues, and the alternate poll rises, but fades, and the circle is complete.

For there to be a truly useful poll, there should be a pollster out there who wishes to do it for his or her own satisfaction, and with total disregard to what other people say. If people like what they see, the poll succeeds; if not, Darwinism goes to work. Perhaps Bruce is that person; the point is arguable from either side, but only time will tell.

I do like alternate methods of polling. The Marco Poll was my favorite zeen poll, and I liked the Games People Play poll enough to revive it. The GPP may succeed in bringing some of the fun back to participating in polls: no controversy, and it gives gamers a chance to wonder about the different games they have played, why they play the way they do, and hear of some new games. Part II of the poll includes a technique called "forced selection" (choosing between two equally attractive or unattractive selections), which alone has caused a lot of ruckus. There is a loss in response, but it is hoped that more truthful answers are derived. It was intended to be controversial in order to gather

interest in the poll.

Back in college, I took a course on Market Research, and we designed a survey for a financial company wishing to target the types of investments that certain groups of people seek. The survey was well over eight pages of "Mickey Mouse Multi-Choice" questions, just enough to get the required information. This should give an idea how ludicrous it is to generate meaningful results from a sample size of 1000 or less.

Can a one-page poll reaching 441 people be called meaningful? Not if you intend to do anything serious. If you aren't being too serious, then does it really matter how the poll is conducted—it won't mean anything statistically, but perhaps polls conducted in the hobby should be geared towards the objectives of increasing participation, retaining people (keeping them interested rather than burning out), and improving timeliness of publishing.

I had suggested to Ken Peel that in the *Zeen Directory* that he include a "Timeliness" rating, such as that found in *Standard & Poor*. Each *ZD*, a weighted average of "Issues Per Year" (52/# issues published within the last 52 weeks) is listed along with its entry, as additional information.

Perhaps the Poll Problem will be solved if other ways of evaluating zeens are considered. Bob Arnett used to have someone write anonymous zeen reviews, and it may be an idea worth reviving. What do you think? The publisher would send the next three issues at their regularly scheduled publishing deadline to the reviewer, or his contact. After receiving the third issue, a brief critique would be written to be published in *HoL*, the *ZD* or *KGO/ZD*. I can't imagine everybody rushing to have their zeens critiqued, so the job wouldn't be too difficult.

[The "Timeliness" index is an interesting idea, but some zeens claim to be quarterly, some monthly, some five- or four-weekly. Shouldn't there be some way to calculate that factor in? A zeen that claims to be quarterly and comes out every thirteen weeks is right on time, *n'est-ce pas*? If he puts out four quick ones in December, his "Timeliness" rating comes out the same, but I wouldn't consider that as timely.

[Anonymous reviews are another interesting idea. I remember Kathy Caruso got very upset once about a critical anonymous review of *KK/W* which appeared in *Give Me A Weapon*. She was out for blood until she found out that Dick had written the review (and why). Who can guarantee the safety and the integrity of the anonymous reviewer? Will we agree with his set of standards? If we can't trust the alleged opinions of 441 people, why should we

listen to just one man's views?

[I'm already tired of the fad of the late 80s: demanding my opinion. "Drood—the musical where *you* decide whodunit!" "Vote for the rock video *you* like best—only 50¢ per call!" "How was our service? Fill out this card and tell us what *you* think!" "You Be The Judge!" I'll give you my opinion when I think it's worth my time and breath.]

(ROBERT SACKS) Whether a zeen is worth subscribing to is based not only on its (subjective) quality, but its cost, your cash flow, and whether it has something you want to read. If you don't care for variants, then it doesn't matter how good *Bushwacker* or *Lord of Hosts* is.

What is the problem with the East German judge?

Surely a publisher with two zeens in the top twelve has the right to criticize the poll.

The full offer was "that if the Runestone Poll is run, I will contribute (to a federally sponsored cancer charity) \$300 less \$1 for every vote cast and less \$5 for every vote cast for myself and for any of my zeens and services, assuming that I receive a report so that I can determine the amounts to be paid."

Hopcroft seems concerned that I might be incensed if he carries a Runestone Poll ballot or a *DW* ad. Why should I be incensed that a novice makes a stupid mistake it's taken me fifteen years to learn to avoid? Besides, I don't think I have any partisans, and I'm not sure I need any.

[The problem with the East German judge is that he downgrades all athletes except those from his own country, whom he upgrades. Watch the scores sometime. The East German judge is never in synch.

[I see Bruce has become much more civil to you in his correspondence lately. He's even taken some of your suggestions about keeping the pref matrix listings, checking for ineligible voters against your sub list, and supplying a list of who voted for your zeen. Funny how just a few months ago, all your ideas were stupid, impossible demands.]

(BRUCE GERYK) I find it incredible that Michael Hopcroft a) considers the issue of deciding what to do about the Runestone Poll ballot to be a "crisis"; b) feels he needs to somehow pacify both Linsey and Sacks, and; c) takes it so seriously that he is somehow able to concoct the ludicrous idea of a "paid advertisement" to worm his way out of his perceived problem. Why does he care? Does he

actually worry about what Sacks and Linsey think of him? Is his self-esteem really that low?

I was also amused to read that Hopcroft thinks I will give his zeen a low vote in the Runestone Poll because I dislike him. As if I am constantly sitting around thinking of how to hurt Michael Hopcroft. Right. Actually, if I were to vote, I wouldn't vote for his zeen, as I only saw one or two copies ages ago and can hardly remember what was in them. I assume that there was a lot of whining, but beyond that, I can't imagine. In any case, I don't even dislike Hopcroft. I've never met him. From what he writes in the hobby, I would venture a guess that meeting him would be a waste of time, but I could be wrong. But who cares? His comment about the "Nielsen Families" was actually interesting. Of course, if they were to exist, they would probably get mass mailings from Linsey every day.

Andy Lischett's comment about the Poll discarding 10% from the modified mean but still having the discarded 10% affect the preference matrix is excellent. But he forgets that the Poll is a model of statistical perfection. Just ask Mark Berch.

[Make up your mind. Does Hopcroft have low self-esteem because he cares what Sacks and Linsey think of him, or does he have an overblown ego because he thinks you sit around thinking of ways to hurt him?]

(LARRY PEERY) I'm always amused at how much effort people who don't believe in polls put into debunking them. I've run the Peeripoll three times in the past dozen or so years, and each time it has gotten good responses, especially from the subjects. Alas, it takes a lot of time and effort. But once again...someday.

[You're surprised that people who don't believe in something would try to persuade others to their disbelief? The name of the game is diplomacy.]

(JOHN CARUSO) Oh yes, Julie—thank you, I stand corrected. I forgot about dropping all of those *KK/W* out of my B-24 on my strafing run over Woody's. Thanks for the assist.

Congratulations on being appointed as the Runestone Poll Custodian Under the Covenant. It's about time Bruce Linsey saw the light. Nothing against you personally, dear one, but I will not participate in the poll again this year either. (Does that mean you'll hound me too?) I've just been soured on the RP itself.

[You'd love it if I'd hound you. Hey, I'm not

voting in the poll either. How's that for a switch: the pollster not voting in her own poll? You might even think I was impartial or something.]

(BILL SALVATORE) Well, I can see that the participants are reaping some psychological reward, but the Linsey/Martin poll feud is a real bore to me. I vote in the poll because I empathize with a spirit of competitiveness. The poll has no statistical validity whatsoever by generally accepted professional standards (my qualifications for making that statement are an MS in math, postgraduate courses in statistics, and 13 years' experience as a Mathematical Statistician (my job title) for the Bureau of Labor Statistics), but what the heck, if Bruce is willing to do the work, I'll go along. Now Dick thinks that Bruce is taking the poll too seriously, and trying to manipulate the results, so he attempts to show it up as a farce by asking *Retal* subbers to vote zero. Bruce understandably discards these votes, and says that he's doing so. So far, legitimate disagreement, and something for discussion. I lose interest, however, when personal vilification enters the affray. Cleverness, perhaps even a touch of snideness for spice, is entertaining, but unimaginative personal attacks are not worth my reading time. Consider whether this kind of induction of negative emotions might contribute to player (as opposed to GM) burnout. Incidentally, Mark Berch's comments on pg 23 of *HoL* #14 (first column only) show that he has very little knowledge of the techniques which professional survey organizations use to reduce the effects of non-response.

[I'm not sure which "unimaginative personal attacks" you are referring to. I try to be entertaining in my personal attacks.]

(MARK BERCH) In replying to my letter on the Runestone Poll, you wrote, "I notice you have singled out John Caruso, Dick ((Martin)), and myself out of the twelve people who commented on the Poll. Why us in particular?"

Because I had something to say, at that time, about remarks made by those three people, and I didn't have something to say, at that time, about what other people said. Is that so complicated? Moreover, if we are going to discuss the topic of people being "singled out," I'll put the shoe on the other foot. I've reviewed *HoL* #12-14, and I saw a number of cases where people were selective about whom they responded to. However, unless I missed something, I'm the only person to be "singled out" for this type of response. Why me "in particular"?

You continue with "If I get 441 people to say the sky is red, will that make it red?" That is not an apt comparison. The color of the sky is an *objective* matter, a question of facts. The Runestone Poll is a subjective matter, a question of personal preferences.

You go on with, "...people (such as you in this letter) who are promulgating the idea that the poll is in any way 'statistically significant' or 'representative of Dipdom's opinion' or 'meaningful' are wrong." For openers, my letter did not contain any of those exact quotes. But to get to the point you allude to, I'll say this: the poll reflects the views of the 441 people whose names are listed in *The Cream Shall Rise*. It is no more than that, but it is also no less than that. It measures a subjective thing: people's preferences and evaluations of GMing and of zeens. It is a view (not the only view) of how we look at ourselves, and it has that significance. In addition, the fact that 441 people voted last year, and 900 during the last three years, also says something. It is a meaningful number, in the sense that, say, the number of years that *Graustark* has been operating, the number of gamestarts each year, etc., are also meaningful—they tell us something about the hobby. 441 people directly participating in a single hobby activity is absolutely unprecedented. Voting in the Runestone Poll has become a normative form of hobby participation (which doesn't mean that people are obligated to do it, of course). It doesn't mean we think it's perfect—any more than I expect a GM to be perfect when I sign up for a game. But I do expect that those who do participate in the Runestone Poll not try to skew the results with phoney ballots, or urge others to do the same, even if they don't like the way it is run and think it's a "joke." In much the same way, if you think a GM is a joke, or don't like the way his games are run, it's not right to try to skew the game (e.g., by signing up under your name for one position, and under a phoney name for a second position, or by signing other people's names to orders you submitted, or any other forms of expressing that you think the game is a farce). Criticize it (the GM or the Runestone Poll) all you want, but don't try to screw it up for those who do want to participate.

On the issue of whether Bruce has the right to exclude votes that were intended as votes on the *Poll* rather than votes on the zeens, I argued that these were apples and oranges, and if he wanted, he could make applesauce rather than fruit salad. You reply, "Your point about my intending zeroes to be votes on the poll is well taken. If the pollster wants to make applesauce, then he should do so..." That

sounds like you've conceded him the right to exclude those votes. And if he has the right to exclude them, then you shouldn't be making them in the first place.

Your sentence then continued from above: "...and find a way to eliminate grudge votes, which are votes on people, not votes on zeens." That's an impossible task. All he can do is ask people to give their honest evaluation of the zeens, and base their vote on that. Unless he's a mindreader, there is nothing else he can do in terms of each person's vote. Moreover, and this is just my personal view, I don't think that these are always as sharp and clear a distinction as you treat them. A person might indeed love *KK/W* because it has so much of the lovable Kathy Byrne. Some zeens have very little of the editor's personality in them, but others have quite a bit.

You say, "And the poll should be de-politicized so that it doesn't draw such votes on itself." That's the old blame-the-victim routine: "Your honor, that little old lady walking down the street drew the defendant, my client, right out of the bushes along with his blackjack and knife."

[For reasons of space, two pages of Berch's letter, which dealt with Larzelere's remarks, have been deleted at his direction. This will appear next issue.]

The last issue I want to take up here is that of unreasonable requirements being placed on the Pollster. An example of that appears in Caruso's letter. Caruso asserts that he got two (2) votes in the GM poll (which isn't even enough to make the main list). Going through the list of 441 names, Caruso found only one of his players, so that one vote was legit, one was not. *Both* were 8s, but Caruso writes anyhow. It's all true, I assume: *Bruce simply reported the votes without bothering to check to see if these people were eligible to vote*. And what does Caruso make of this:

"...the Pollster was part of the fraud. He could just as easily deleted the illegal vote for me. I only GM one PBM game right now, and it's in every issue. He could check my player's names next to the voter's names. But he didn't do that..." No, he didn't, but does that make him part of the fraud? And let's have a look at what he could have "just as easily" done. First, he'd have to collect every issue of *KK/W* (after all, someone might have played just one season)—no mean feat, considering that John doesn't allow him to subscribe. Then he's have to create a list of players and check it against the list of voters. Then he'd have to write Caruso to see if there were any other games that Caruso was running—perhaps a GGM elsewhere or being run

on a games-only flyer or zeen. Then he'd have to write to the player to see if there was some reasonable explanation (e.g., the player might be voting under his real name but, unbeknownst to Caruso, playing under a pseudonym. People have played under pseudonyms without telling the GM). That is a staggering amount of work, but if he doesn't do it, he can't eliminate the illegal vote, and then John Caruso calls him part of a fraud. And all this must be done before the results get published. And mind you, if he does this for Caruso, doesn't he also have to do it for the other 115 GMs who received votes in the Poll? To prevent what John refers to as "a 50% 'illegal' vote" from appearing in *The Cream Shall Rise* is a prohibitive burden.

And answer me this, John: who else has this sort of burden, to screen out the improper in advance? I gave you an item for your PDO auction, a bundle of wargaming magazines. Did you check with me in advance to make sure I *really* had the item? Do you check to see if some of the people submitting items even existed? When Dick Martin ran the census, did he check to make sure that every name was really that of a hobby member, and that all the addresses were right? When Ken Peel gets a form for his zeen directory for a zeen he hasn't actually seen, does he check to find out if there really is such a zeen? When Kathy Byrne was BNC, and she got a set of end-game stats, did she check to make sure that every name on the roster really played in the game? When Dick Martin ran a GM Poll, did he check to make sure everyone who voted was entitled to? When other people ran zeen polls, either RP or the Marco Poll, did they check the names of the voters against the names of players to make sure these were all legit? Why is it, John, that everyone else is entitled to accept what they receive in good faith and print it, but when *Bruce Linsey* does it, you criticize him ("not only didn't the pollster protect...me as a GM") and call him part of a fraud.

Nor is that the only double standard I see. John, you're not happy when an improper vote was cast for your GMing. But I look in *HoL* in vain for your criticism of Dick Martin for urging that improper *Retaliation* zero votes be cast. And also, you think Bruce should have thrown out that ballot (even though it would take an investigation to discover its impropriety). But when Dick Martin argued that Bruce should have counted those improper *Retaliation* zero votes anyhow, did you write in to *HoL* to say that it was quite proper for Bruce Linsey to disqualify an improper vote? Sounds like it's one of those damned if you do and damned if you don't situations.

Yes, I realize that I haven't responded to everyone, but this has gone on long enough.

[Mark, I would like to introduce you to a new use of the quotation punctuation mark: to indicate irony. Maybe you are too literal-minded to use quotes that way, but others of us do.

[In the past, it has been presented as a matter of fact, not opinion, that the winner of The Poll was "the best zeen in the hobby." It is quite a recent change of position on the part of the pollster and The Poll's supporters to admit that The Poll is not only just a question of personal preferences, but furthermore, only the preferences of a certain segment of Dipdom, not the whole bunch.

[I concede that the pollster has the right to make applesauce if that's what he's going to do: make applesauce. That means removing *all* the seeds and peels, not just the ones that suit (or don't suit) him. And he shouldn't claim later that he's made "Apples Supreme," or some such. It's still just applesauce.

[You're right about votes for some zeens being based on personality. I was thinking about grudge votes from people who don't get the zeen anymore, but claim they saw three issues at a con, and yes, it's still a piece of trash, which is why they don't sub anymore, but still give it a zero in The Poll. Suddenly (or finally), Linsey seems to have recognized that everyone is not being as aboveboard and honest as they're supposed to be. He's making some changes which should help alleviate the problem—letting pubbers send in sub lists, and offering voter lists to pubbers.

[If Linsey hadn't turned The Damn Poll into a political tool, no one would be calling him down now to do impossible amounts of work you depict to prove and to insure it isn't corrupt. If it was just the "fun" poll it used to be, few would really care if it was messed up or not. Talk about your "blame-the-victim" routine. We are the victims.]

(ALAN STEWART) It seems to me that much confusion arises in Runestone Poll argumentation because of a failure to recognize the character and purpose of the poll. A political public opinion poll purports to describe the attitudes of a large population based on a small sample, which, to provide accurate results, must be randomly chosen. The Runestone Poll has some of the attributes of such a Poll. There is another kind of "poll"—an election is the perfect example of such a poll. An American election will usually mirror the actual preference of the whole eligible-to-vote population fairly accurately simply because of the size of the sample. But it is quite possible that in a close

election it will give an inaccurate estimate of which of two candidates is preferred by the whole eligible population if groups who turn out less than the population as a whole do have a strong preference for one of the two candidates. But you know what—no one cares, because the candidate who wins the election becomes President, and the preferences of those who didn't bother to turn out have become irrelevant. The election itself is the contest or competition—the polls that are taken during the campaign are attempts to estimate how that contest is going at various stages during the campaign.

The Runestone Poll has attributes of both types of “polls,” but it is preeminently a “contest.” It doesn't need to have a totally random sample. It records the preference of those who are interested enough in the hobby to vote. At the same time, the results of such a “contest” are of interest to the degree that they mirror the opinions of the whole hobby.

So, to Julie's argument. Having 440 voters instead of, say 100, would not make the sample any much better statistically if the sample is not random, but if the universe being sampled is small enough, big numbers of voters will help to some degree—a sample of 900 out of a total “universe” of 1000 will have more significance than one of 400 out of 1000, for example—here you are out of the world of random sampling altogether and approaching significance through the pure *exhaustiveness* of the sample. You don't need to get votes from “every single person,” as Julie suggests. To take the extreme example, I think it's obvious that a sample of 999 people out of a universe of 1000 would be pretty damn significant, “random” or not.

The significance of size of sample in a contest-type poll is much more important, and here we are out of the world of sample mathematics and into the world of common sense. If 44% of a population votes, the contest will be more meaningful than if only 10% votes, simply because it demonstrates that the 44% contest has aroused that much more interest and participation. You may not have a much better estimate of the preferences of the whole 1000 people in the hobby, but you have a 100% reliable estimate of the preferences of that portion of the hobby interested enough to vote—and the larger that percentage interested enough to vote is, the more “meaningful” the results are.

So is the poll “a joke or a toy”? Well, it isn't a joke, but “toy” isn't such a bad description—a way of having a little pleasant enjoyment, combined with some edification. I guess you could compare it to an educational toy. And people who run

“give-my-zeen-a-zero” campaigns are like kids who see other kids building a Lego structure and say, “Look, we all have our types of fun. Your type of fun is to build that lego thing; mine is to kick the thing down and take the blocks and throw them at people I don't like. Who are you to stop me from having *my* type of fun?”

No, that's a little too strong. Bruce went a little overboard when he accused you of trying to “destroy” the poll; if you wanted to do that, you could have done a much more thorough job of it, I know. You didn't try to destroy the whole lego structure, only that very small part of it that you considered yours to play with because you pub the zeen. But I don't regard even the *Retal* part of the poll as yours to play with. I think it belongs to the voters and anybody else who wants to see what people think of *Retal* or indeed any other zeen. Maybe you don't think much of the fun that people have by counting the hobby's honest preferences, but I wish you'd let them—us—have it. I'm sure it must bug you to see all the attention the poll receives and to have the fact of its existence and health flaunted at you at every opportunity, but it would be an admirable act of self-abnegation if you'd just resolve to ignore it rather than trying—not to destroy, no, but to interfere with it, even just a little bit.

There's my lecture of the day, and I hope you're feeling well and truly shamed.

Dick's comment, “If you make rules, you *must* stick by them” looks interesting juxtaposed to his comment in the same issue that house rules should be guidelines only and not the law. I think you're right to take the hard line: neither *EE* nor *NFA* should have been included this year, although the Davis rule is a bad one anyway. Anybody who produces three issues should be on the ballot, whether they come at the beginning or the end of the polling period.

Again, I think Dick misapprehends the true purpose of the poll when he suggests that voters should be voting by preferences and not one-to-ten absolute, his idea being that they should be “fixing” their votes to have the maximum effect on the results. Who's taking the poll too seriously now? His approach would emphasize the “contest” aspect of the poll to an extreme degree, making the whole thing into a kind of war-of-all-against-all wherein you try to maximize your chances of your favourite zeens at the expense of somebody else's favourites. Just give everything an honest ranking from one-to-ten and let the final results be determined by the honest opinions of the whole.

Michael Hopcroft says “I don't think there's any objective way to prove which is the best zeen of the

year." Sheesh—where do you get these guys anyway? Has anyone anywhere suggested that the poll does, or should, "prove" anything? If someone thinks *Kathy's Korner/Whitestonia* is the best zeen in the hobby, as I would bet many people do, do people taunt them and say, "Sorry—the Runestone Poll *proves* you wrong"? I've never met anyone who thinks anything like that, and that certainly includes the pubbers who finish high in the poll.

Paul Milewski suggests that "the results are invalid because there is not a semantic differential associated with the numerical rankings... a 7 to you may have distinctly different connotations of quality than a 7 to me." Rather absurd, as people also have different conceptions of the meanings of terms such as "good," "very good," "excellent," etc, and of the distance between the terms, *e.g.*, how much better than very good is "excellent"? Problems would be created if some arbitrary classifications such as "good," "poor" were grafted onto the numerical results after the fact, which does not happen. Indeed, numerical standards are less susceptible to problems caused by differences in personal standards of assessment than verbal ones.

Milewski says, "It is possible that some people assume the scale is arithmetic, so that an 8 is twice as good as a 4." True. It is also possible that some people assume the scale works like a decibel scale, so that 5 is ten times as high as a 4. Yet both are unlikely, though morons are everywhere. The poll does not commit one error Paul is "reminded of," that of establishing a false averageness level above which more than half of all zeens fit. "5" means (if anything), not "average," but blah, and more meaningfully, not as good as 6 but better than 4.

Finally, I have received a mass mailing from Bruce Linsey in which he announces that he is heretofore boycotting *HoL* and sending his poll letters to *Praxis* instead. Although I do not agree with his criticisms suggesting that your editorial policy treats him unfairly, his plan does have the advantage of keeping some guaranteed-to-be-acrimonious controversy out of *HoL*, freeing it up for more worthy discussions. I imagine that you would have been happier had he not written you in the first place anyway, and I get piles of camera-ready pages, so for once everyone comes out for the better.

[Gee, Alan, where were you when people were interfering with the counting of the hobby's honest preferences by voting 0 for zeens when they didn't like the pubber? I'll bet you could have even talked Gary out of giving us a 0! Think it doesn't happen

anymore? Maybe the "give-Retal-a-zero" was just a clever way of making sure that grudge 0s were thrown out!

[Thank you for presenting a soft-spoken and well-spoken version of what the Dark Side, or as you call it, "The Hobby Establishment," has evidently been trying to spit out for months. Since you seem to have the philosophy down pat, why don't you run The Poll? I think that would effectively depoliticize The Poll—an idea which Berch and Linsey regard as a lot of crap.

[Your Presidential election analogy breaks down because people do not have to run in that election if they don't want to. "If nominated, I will not run; if elected I will not serve."

[All we really want is to be left alone. That can be accomplished by leaving our zeens out of The Poll, or finding another pollster, or both. Why don't you be the self-abnegating one and sacrifice a little of your fun so that others can be left in peace?

[I should probably write in to *Praxis*, but since you stole all my thunder this time, I'll save a little for myself. You wrote that my comments about The Poll were obnoxious. Most of them were intended to be humorous, but I see from your latest issue that I'm out of touch with the current tone of hobby correspondence. Sarcasm appears to be out. OK, I can tone down. But it's not fair to compare my comments to Dick's "very restrained editorial comments." Who do you think kept him restrained? He's usually a hell of a lot more sarcastic than I. It was easier to keep him restrained when I was sitting back looking over his shoulder than it is to restrain myself. Especially when I have to type in lots of l-o-o-ng letters about a topic I was uninterested in to begin with, and have since grown quite sick of.

[In case you haven't figured it out, I don't care for polls at all, any polls run by anybody. One, it's too easy to lie with statistics. Two, polls encourage people to compete rather than cooperate. We have enough competitive instinct already without being egged on.

[In all fairness, you should have noted that Linsey got more obnoxious when he pulled out, too. Or maybe I just see copies of his obnoxious letters to other people, which you don't. Nowadays, he shows a complete change of face, and is bending over backwards to try to accommodate everyone's suggestions for The Poll. Why now? Could it be because, this year, Rex Martin is watching?]

(DICK MARTIN) Contrary to popular perception, I plan to vote in the Linsey Poll again this year. My ballot will probably be thrown out again for being "destructive" but that's life. It's

manifestly apparent that the pollster isn't looking to be impartial, but rather to demonstrate to anybody with any doubts that *he* is The Boss. Not to be trifled with. And you will vote *his* way, or not at all. Does this attitude lead to greater "enjoyment" for the ignorant masses? Higher "statistical significance" for those of us interested in that sort of thing? I have my doubts.

That Linsey must make his arguments in his own carefully choreographed production is a telling point. That he must carefully choose which trivial points he can blast, while blatantly ignoring any issue which may appear the least bit unfavorable is extremely frustrating. It's like talking to a wall. He's not interested in any discussion of the issues, that seems clear.

All right, I confess. There was a boycott of the Linsey Poll in its first year. Carefully choreographed, executed to perfection, and totally effective. The organizer? Why Bruce Linsey, of course! How else to explain the results? To wit: a zeen which hadn't done particularly well in past polls, whose final issue consists of reams of reprints, history rewrites and self indulgence, and which is actively driving subbers away in droves, wins the thing going away. Just coincidence that the pollster happens to publish the thing? Yeah, right. No, The League of Linsey Former Friends just didn't vote at all, propelling *VOD* to the top. The high-handed imperial pollster drove off the voters who, tired of putting up with his antics, decided not to have anything more to do with the situation. Which demonstrates that there are at least two ways to finish high in the Linsey Poll: publish a decent zeen, or so alienate any voters that may not like the zeen that they won't vote.

Not a boycott on our part, more like the old "let the baby have his bottle" tactic. Too bad it hasn't worked.

Interesting to see that *Retal* "would have a much better chance [to win] if Dick had a better attitude toward the Poll." Isn't that what I've said all along? But rather than winning the thing, I'd settle for not being attacked by it. Apparently that is too much to ask.

[Oooo, now who's obnoxious?

[It looks like some of what Linsey appeared to be ignoring has actually sunk in. What's your explanation for all he changes Linsey is suddenly making in The Poll this year? Is he still "The Boss"?

[In this case, it was Randy who told Bruce "I'm tired of bein' the Boss. Why don't you be the Boss for awhile?" I guess you have to know your Randy Newman to get that one....]

Why?

(BILL SALVATORE) Russ Rusnak should run Gunboat or Blind games. I (apparently unlike those who have stopped subbing to *Who Cares*, if his analysis of why they stopped is correct) prefer to follow a Gunboat or Blind game in a mag because then I can put myself in each player's place and say, "What would I do now?" I can't do that with regular games because I don't know what negotiating is going on behind the scenes.

Meat Is Murder

The following people have inquired recently (and not so recently) about postal Dip:

Qarl Anderson, 323 Locust, Winnetka, IL 60093-3610

David Andersson, 5790B Brown Avenue, Ft Knox, KY 40121

Richard Bender, 6465 Scotts Valley Dr, Scotts Valley, CA 95066

David Blaylock, 119 Allen Farm Rd, Canton, NC 28716

David Brodie, 4412 Berryman Ave, Apt #6, Los Angeles, CA 90230

Eric Brosius, 41 Hayward St, Milford, MA 01757

Mike Crane, 121 E Audrey Ave, Baltimore, MD 21225

Kevin Crawford, 7129 Seaford Rd, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Jeff Dickerson, 4819 Oakhurst Pl, Indianapolis, IN 46254

Charles Fargo, 76 Traveler Lane, Marshfield, MA 02050

Brent Farha, 1017 Indiana, Basement, Lawrence, KS 66044

Jon Fleischman, 3318 S Bentley Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90034

Mike Fossell, 8524 Westbrook Dr, Sturtevant, WI 53177

Philosopher Fritz, Andersenstr 6, 2875 Ganderkesee 2, West Germany

Charles Greger, 2621 McCulloch, Apt 1A, Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403

(R A) Bob Hartwig, 6612 West 113th Ave, Westminster, CO 80020

Rob Hetland, 14007 White Birch Rd, Minnetonka, MN 55343

Dan Huffman, 12843 Lockbury Cir, Apt C, Germantown, MC 20874

Chuck Kroegel, 86 Tennant Ave, San Jose, CA 95138

Patrick G Lee, 10114 Limewood Lane, Sugar Land, TX 77478

Mark Lilleleht, P O Box 3166, Charlottesville, VA 22903

James F Michaels, RD 1, Box 146, Clarks Summit, PA 18411

Robert Minck, 2454 Wildhorse Dr, San Ramon, CA 94583

Tom Nash, 6509 Copper Ridge Dr, #201, Baltimore, MD 21209

David Peterson, 5236 Racine Ct, Bonita, CA 92002

Bruce Reiff, 36 S Main St, Rittman, OH 44270

Ronald Rowe, 508 17th St, Nederland, TX 77627
 Richard Rudisill III, 9933 Clearfield Ave, Vienna, VA 22180
 Bill Salvatore, 19985 Wild Cherry Lane, Waters' Landing,
 MD 20874-1015
 Ian Schank, 5555 Flanders Rd, Toledo, OH 43623
 Gary Wallstrom, 388 Lincoln St, Abington, MA 02351

(**BILL SALVATORE**) Withered Vegetables: Please list me in the inquiry list. Thanks; I love to get mail, any mail (it's safe 'cause I confine myself to one femail).

(**ERIC BROSIUS**) I have seen *Diplomacy World* and *NUTMGS* and Dick Martin's zeen (can't remember the name!).

(**LARRY PEERY**) Gee, I thought Fruit Loops was going to be a discussion of my favorite

subject--no, Julie, not me! Cereal! I like Cheerios and Shredded Wheat. Isn't that original? Why don't you do a cereal survey and find out something important about us?

(**KEN PEEL**) Finally, Julie, I'll try to remember to send you my Fruit Loops list, which I have been compiling over the past four months or so. So, maybe some of these "loopies" have really become pretty mainstream by now. I've been keeping track of all those who have requested 'zines from the Zine Bank, as well as those who have purchased Zine Registers and *MOD* and *Supernova*. Also, I have been getting tons of requests for *Ponteviedria* due to Uncle Rex's little mention in the Diplomacy theme issue of *The General*.

New Business: The Bad Boys

(**LARRY PEERY**) How are people reacting to the Bad Boys? And how should we deal with them, either individually or collectively?

(**PETE GAUGHAN**) Printing my comments on the Beastie Boys of Dip was bad luck—I ran an editorial in #57 asking them to back off. I like their attitude toward games, I hate their attitude toward people.

(**BRUCE GERYK**) Your new topic for next issue should be The Bad Boys.

[Guess what people want to talk about? Not a subject I really would have picked myself, since, as I've said before, I'd prefer to discuss issues and not personalities in this zeen. But hey, if it's good enough for *Praxis*, it's good enough for me. Perhaps we can discuss the Bad Boys as a concept.

[Basically, I think the concept is good. It's something I've tried to express many times before, through satire and zeen-faking and poll-tampering and all those other kinds of nasty fun—some people in Dipdom take the hobby and themselves too seriously, and should be encouraged to lighten up.

Unfortunately, precisely because these people *do* take it all so seriously, they get all upset about *what* I'm doing, and miss the reason *why*.

[So I've gotten a lot of flak in my time. I haven't always taken it well (not like Woody can—I truly admire his composure), and so it's kind of a treat to sit back and watch someone else get it for a while, particularly since they don't seem to mind too much either.

[It's funnier to watch the Hobby Establishment's reaction from this vantage, too. I like to imagine the look on Bruce Linsey's face when his pet Geryk turned around and bit him. I enjoy seeing the normally pristine Simon Billenness get down and even dirtier than the Bad Boys he so despises. And to all the Poll supporters who voted *Blunt Instruments* number two, and who now feel that Geryk is an ungrateful wretch—if you had read the zeen instead of just voting the party line, you would have noticed that he was saying all along that you were too stupid to appreciate his zeen.

[But something is wrong when Chris Carrier (or should that be Chris Carrion), the feudmonger, can't get along with the Bad Boys. They should be natural allies, wouldn't you think? Or has the original concept degenerated into mere frat-boy type bashing of everyone not in the frat? Gimme a clue!]



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